

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Canceled)
3. (Currently Amended) A valve holder comprising a central support member, three spaced valve support legs extending radially from said support member, each of said legs including thread guiding and attaching means at ~~a~~ the distal end thereof, and thread collecting means associated with said central support member and adapted to collect threads passing through the thread guiding means of said valve support legs, said central support member comprises a hub and annular flange extending therefrom, said hub being adapted for association with said thread collecting means, said thread collecting means comprising an axle rotatable in said hub of said central support member whereby threads passing through the thread guiding means of said valve support legs are collected by rotating said axle to wind said threads therein.
4. (Previously Presented) The valve holder of Claim 3 wherein said thread collecting means includes a base plate coaxially affixed at the one end of said axle, said base plate having thread attaching means incorporated therein.

5. (Previously Presented) The valve holder of Claim 4 wherein said central support member includes a cylindrical skirt depending from said annular flange and encircling the base plate of said thread collecting means, said skirt including three apertures in registry with said valve support legs for the passage of thread.

6. (Previously Presented) The valve holder of Claim 5 wherein the inner wall of said cylindrical skirt includes ratchet teeth and the base plate of said thread collecting means includes a pawl adapted to engage said teeth and permit rotation of said thread collecting means in one direction only.

7. (Previously Presented) The valve holder of Claim 3 wherein the hub of said central support member and the axle of said thread collecting means include cooperating elements to resist axial displacement while permitting free rotation of said thread collecting means.

8. (Canceled).

9. (Currently Amended) A valve holder comprising a central support member, three spaced valve support legs extending radially from said support member, each of said legs including thread guiding and attaching means at a distal end thereof, and

thread collecting means associated with said central support member and adapted to collect threads passing through the thread guiding means of said valve support legs.

~~The valve holder of Claim 1 wherein~~ said thread guiding and attaching means comprise an angled slot in the distal end of each valve support leg.

10. (Currently Amended) The valve holder of Claim 3 wherein said axle is drilled and tapped to receive a ~~the~~ threaded spindle of a handle member.

11. (Previously Presented) The valve holder of Claim 7 wherein said cooperating elements comprise a circumferential groove in said axle and inward projecting cleats in said hub adapted to engage said groove.

12. (Currently Amended) A valve holder comprising a centrally positioned cylindrical support element having one open end, a coaxial hub extending from the other end of said cylindrical support element and joined together by a radial flange; coaxial thread collecting means encircled by said cylindrical support element and rotatably secured thereto; at least three circumferentially spaced support legs extending radially from said cylindrical element, each of said legs including thread guiding and attaching means at a ~~the~~ distal end thereof; and

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thread passage means in said cylindrical element in registry with each of said valve support legs.

13. (Previously Presented) The valve holder of Claim 12, wherein said thread collecting means comprises a base plate and stub axle extending from one side thereof, said axle extending into and being rotatably secured within the hub of said cylindrical element.

14. (Previously Presented) The valve holder of Claim 13 wherein the inner wall of said cylindrical element includes ratchet teeth and the base plate of said thread collecting means includes a pawl adapted to engage said teeth and permit rotation of said thread collecting means in only one direction.

15. (Previously Presented) The valve holder of Claim 13 wherein the axle of the thread collecting means and hub of said cylindrical support element include cooperating interacting means to resist axial displacement while permitting free rotation.

16. (Previously Presented) The valve holder of Claim 15 wherein said cooperating elements comprise a circumferential groove in said axle and inward projecting cleats in said hub adapted to engage said groove.

17. (Previously Presented) The valve holder of Claim 12 wherein said cylindrical element includes thread passages through the wall thereof in registry with said valve support legs.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Canceled)

20. (Canceled)

21. (Currently Amended) In combination, a porcine tissue heart valve and a valve holder; said valve including a stent comprising a sewing cushion and three fabric covered, axially extending commissure support struts; said valve holder comprising a central support member, three spaced valve support legs extending radially from said support member, each of said legs including thread guiding and attaching means at a ~~the~~ distal end thereof, and thread collecting means associated with said central support member and adapted to collect threads passing through the thread guiding means of said valve support legs; said central support member comprising a hub and annular flange extending therefrom, said hub being adapted for association with said thread collecting means,

said thread collecting means of said valve holder comprising an axle rotatable in said hub of said central support member, said valve holder being positioned on the sewing cushion of said valve with valve support legs in registry with said commissure support struts and attached to said sewing cushion by means of threads, each of said threads being attached at one end to the distal end of a valve support leg and passing therefrom through said sewing cushion, thence through the fabric cover at ~~a~~ the tip of the corresponding commissure support strut, thence extending to the next adjacent commissure support strut and passing through the fabric cover at the tip thereof, thence passing through sewing cushion and through the thread guiding ~~guide~~ means in the distal end of the corresponding valve support leg, and thereupon extending to and being attached to said thread collecting means, whereupon the tips of the commissure support struts are drawn toward one another as said threads passing through the thread guiding means of said valve support legs are collected by rotating said axle to wind said threads together.

22. (Previously Amended) The combination of Claim 21 wherein said thread collecting means includes a base plate coaxially affixed at one end of said axle, said base plate having thread attaching means incorporated therein.

23. (Previously Amended) The combination of Claim 22 wherein said central support member includes a cylindrical skirt depending from said annular flange and encircling the base plate of said thread collecting means, said skirt including three apertures in registry with said valve support legs for the legs for the passage of thread.

24. (Previously Amended) The combination of Claim 23 wherein the inner wall of said cylindrical skirt includes ratchet teeth and the base plate of said thread collecting means includes a pawl adapted to engage said teeth and permit rotation of thread collecting means in one direction only.

25. (Currently Amended) A valve holder comprising a central support member, three spaced valve support legs extending radially from said support member, each of said legs including thread guiding and attaching means at a ~~the~~ distal end thereof, and thread collecting means rotatably mounted with respect to said central support member and adapted to collect threads passing through the thread guiding means of said valve support legs.

26. (Previously Amended) The valve holder of Claim 25 wherein said thread guiding and attaching means comprise an aperture in the distal end of each valve support leg.

27. (Previously Amended) The valve holder of Claim 25 wherein said thread guiding and attaching means comprise an angled slot in the distal end of each valve support leg.

28. (Currently Amended) In combination, a tricuspid prosthetic heart valve and a valve holder;

said valve including a stent comprising a sewing cushion and three fabric covered, axially extending commissure support struts;

said valve holder comprising a central support member, three spaced valve support legs extending radially from said support member, each of said legs including thread guiding and attaching means at ~~a the~~ distal end thereof, and thread collecting means rotatably mounted with respect to said central support member and adapted to collect threads passing through the thread guiding means of said valve support legs;

said valve holder being positioned on the sewing cushion of said valve with valve support legs in registry with said commissure support struts and attached to said sewing cushion by means of threads, each of said threads being attached at one end to the distal end of a valve support leg and passing therefrom through said sewing cushion, thence through the fabric cover at ~~a the~~ tip of the corresponding commissure support strut, thence extending to the next adjacent commissure support strut and passing through the fabric cover at the tip thereof, thence passing through sewing cushion and through the thread guiding ~~guide~~ means in the distal end of the corresponding

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valve support leg, and thereupon extending to and being attached to said thread collecting means, whereupon the tips of the commissure support struts are drawn toward one another as said threads are collected by said thread collecting means.

29. (Canceled)

30. (Canceled)

31. (Canceled)

32. (Canceled)

33. (Canceled)